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arglebargle!

tuesday, october 23, 2007

Ploog-Things

As a kid Mike Ploog was always some of my favorite artists. One of the first Marvel comics I collected was *Man-Thing*. Aw, bite me. I won't apologize for that. But talk about a book that was all over the map! Steve Gerber cut his teeth on this book, incorporating elements of human interest, Rod Serling and Sword and Sorcery (Hey, Howard the Duck

about me

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came out of those early stories). But art-wise pretty much anything could happen. Gray Morrow one issue...the next Jim Starlin, then John Buscema, Tom Sutton, etc.

I picked up my first issues from "Grave Dave" Newton (along with most of my Monster Times issues too) then I started buying it off the stands. I came in the end of Mike Ploog's original run on the book. This comic (ish#5) in particular was particularly notorious since it was the very issue that Power Records --in their infinite wisdom-- chose to adapt to as one of their *"See and Hear"* Marvel comics book-and- record series.

Right. A jolly story about a depressed circus clown that dabbles in the occult and commits suicide by blowing his brains out. Great one for the kiddies, huh? In fact -- It was the first of a *two-part story* that ends with cliffhanger --a cliffhanger that somebody at Power records chose to re-write with a ... *choke*...happy ending! (blasphemy!)

Here's a recent recreation of the same issue cover art by Mike which I present here to show not only how his style changed and became more refined over the years, but also to help cleanse the Karmic palette of the the great wrong once dealt it.

Mike worked on other Marvel monsters too. like this issue of Werewolf by Night -- but that's just an excuse to show this horror babe.

2009 is Bustin' Loose All Over!

R. I. P. Bettie Page

Black & White in COLOR #5 : The CREATURE!

archives

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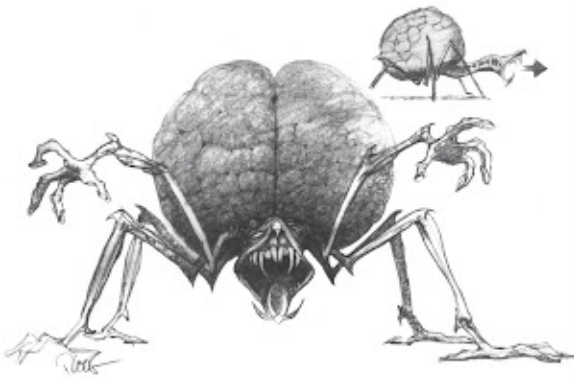
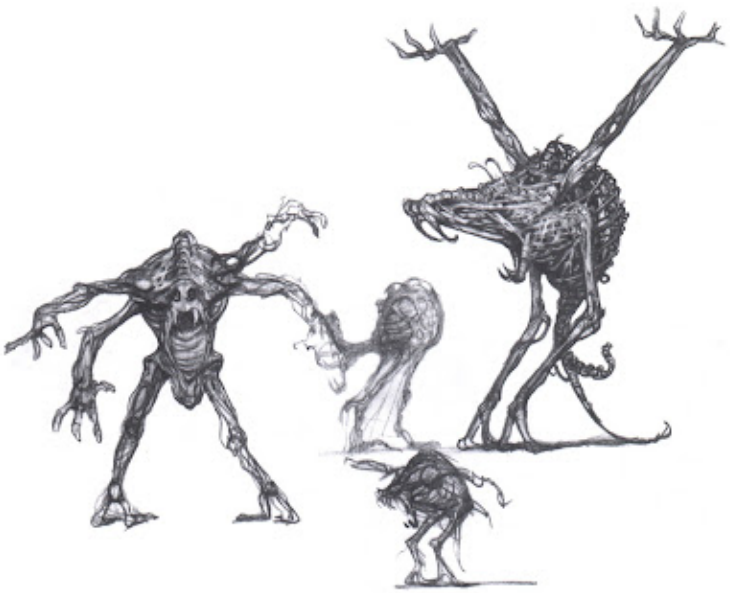
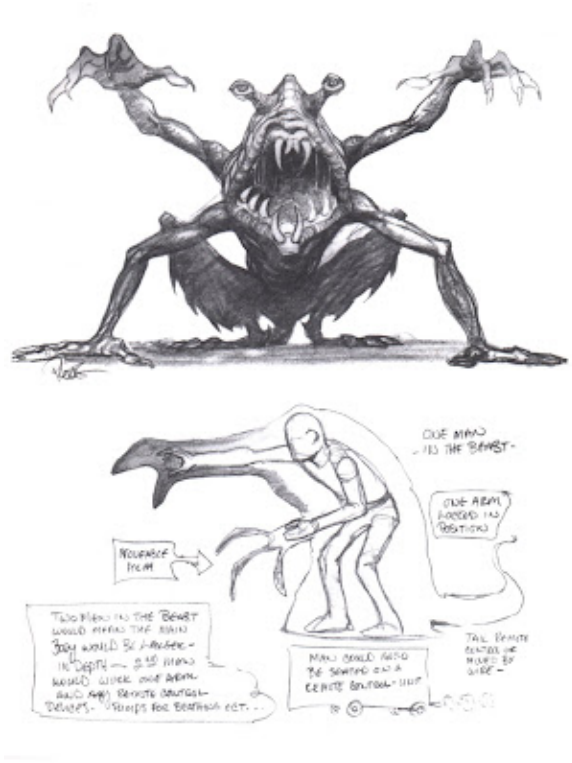
I Power Blogger

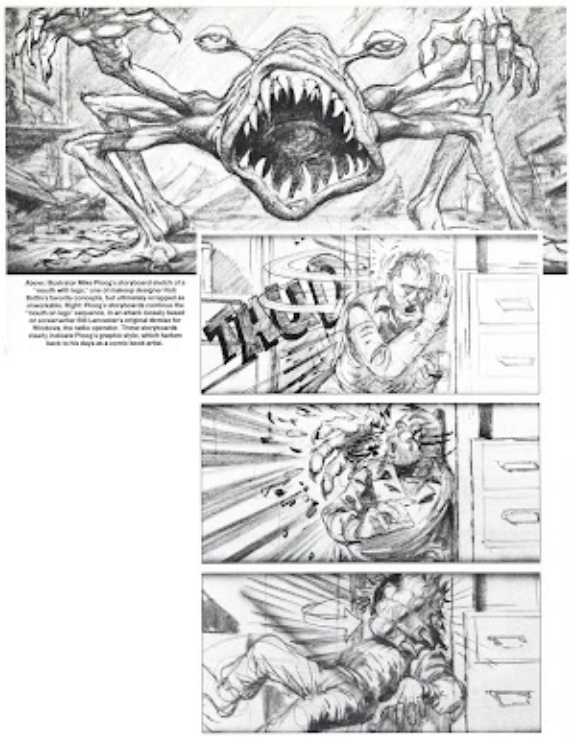
All this early monster work made Mike the natural choice by Director John Carpenter to help envision *The Thing* in his upcoming remake of the 1951 Howard Hawks Classic. They delivered a film the likes of which had never been seen before. Here's some of his first design work on the movie...



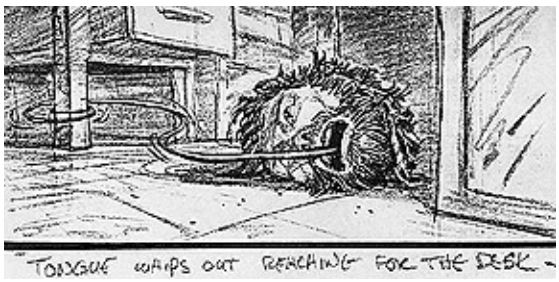


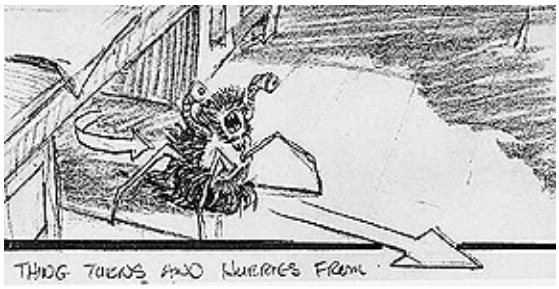


...And some of Mike's excellent storyboard work he did for the film!



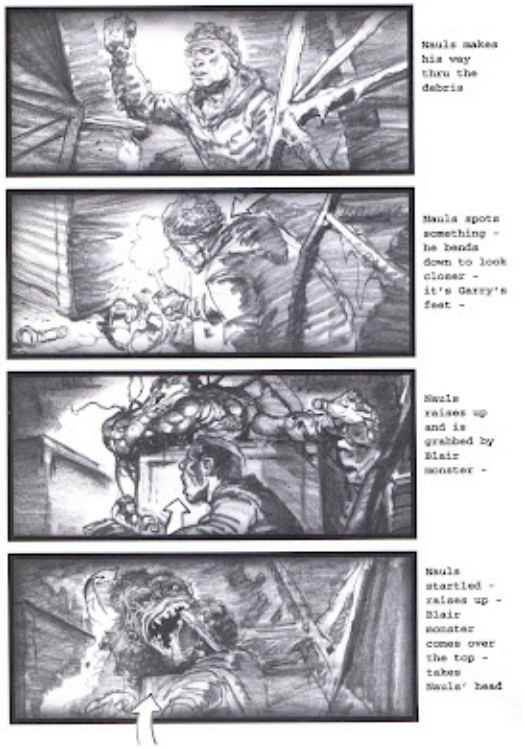
Designs for Norris


TONGUE WARPS OUT REACHING FOR THE DESK -

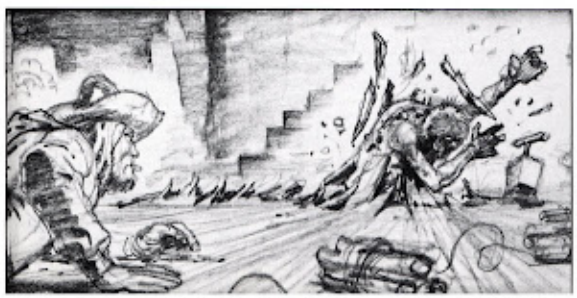


10 NAULS MAKES HIS WAY THRU THE DEBRIS
11 NAULS SPOTS SOMETHING - ITS GARGOYS FEET-
12 NAULS RAISES UP AND IS GRABBED BY BLAIR MONSTER -

The ultimate fate of Nauls—the young, black cook—is never shown in the final cut of the film. A brief sequence involving a lethal attack by the Thing was storyboarded by Michael Ploog (above) and filmed, but was eventually discarded by John Carpenter as unsuccessful. The creature hid in a large box and popped out to seize Nauls by his head, yanking him off his feet. Bottin was forced to film the sequence before the bugs had been worked out, and he agreed with Carpenter that the work was sub-par. Both the shot, and Nauls' fate, were eliminated.


Naula makes his way thru the debris
Naula spots something - he bends down to look closer - it's Garry's feet -
Naula raises up and is grabbed by Blair monster -
Naula startled - raises up - Blair monster comes over the top - takes Naula' head

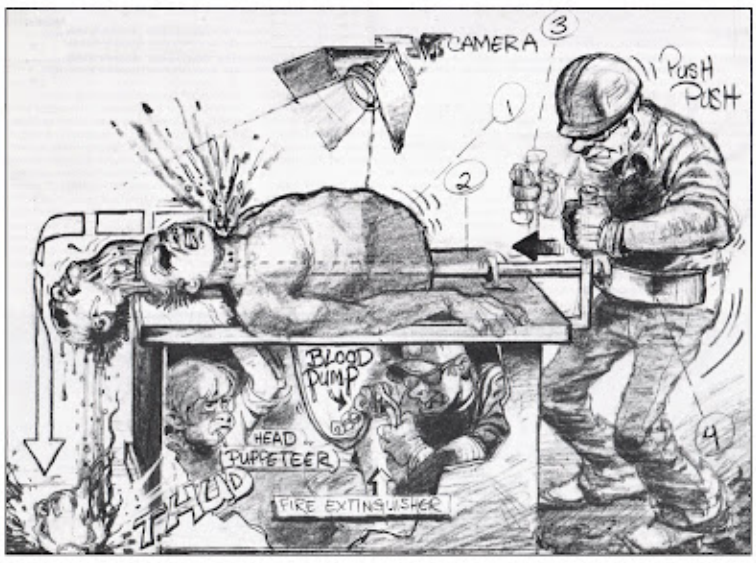
In addition to sketching concepts in the screenplay, illustrator Mike Ploog often had to invent small bits of business to tie scenes together, including the death of Garry (above), who is killed by Blair. Rollin and Ploog worked freely on the concept sketches, knowing they would probably have to redesign many of the effects to make them easier to film. For example, instead of having to plunge Blair's hand into Garry's face and up into his skull as in the sketch, Rollin merely attached plastic latex appliances to Donald Moffat's cheeks, giving the appearance of stretched flesh. The intruding hand, incidentally, was Rollin's.



Left: Mike Ploog's early storyboard of the Hair-monster sequence, used to plan out the live-action photography.

Mike also did these great gag drawings that spelled out --in layman's

terms some of the intense special effects needed for the "Norris Sequence" in the film.



Over twelve years later the Thing and it's theories were clearly still on Mike's mind and influencing his illustration work. (Or is it just me?...)

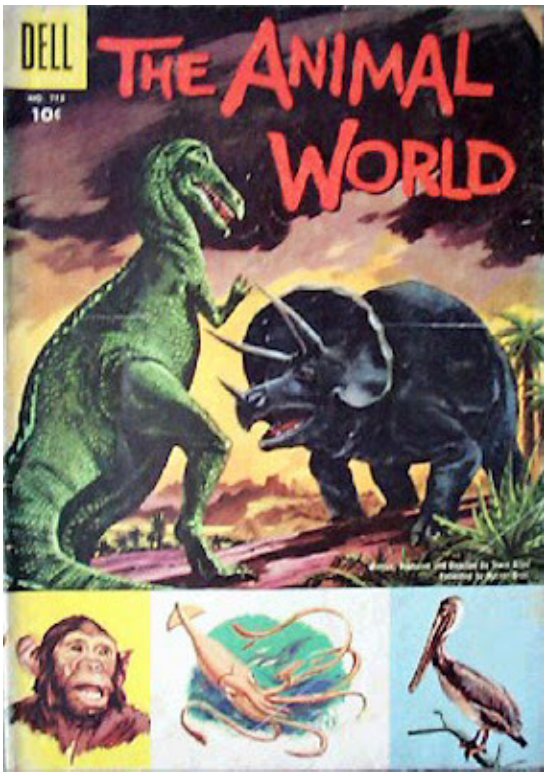
Thanks and a big HAPPY HALLOWEEN for this post go out to Mike Ploog, John Carpenter, Rob Bottin, Universal Pictures, Frederick S. Clarke, Cinefantastique Magazine, and S Q Productions.

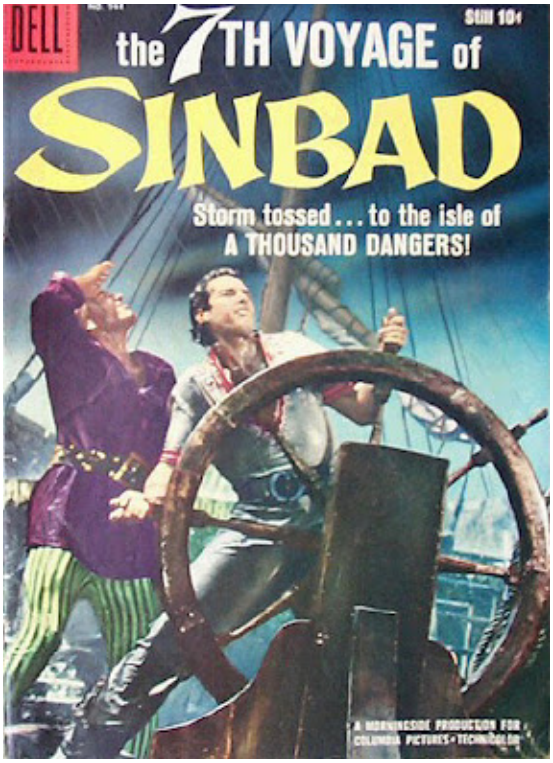
posted by c. martin croker at 11:45 pm | 6 comments

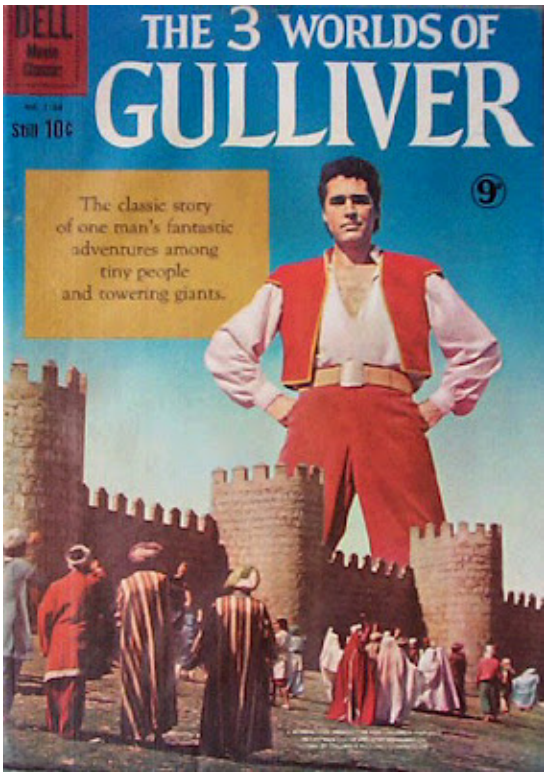
wednesday, october 17, 2007

Stop-Motion Comic books

Looking at that old Gwangi comic got me thinking... what captures the fire and excitement of Harryhausen's stop-motion like a Dell comic-book adaptation?
Ah, what the hell...they're still *cool!* (I was just surprised how many other Harryhausen movies that they covered!)




DELL
STILL 10¢
the 7TH VOYAGE of
SINBAD
Storm tossed... to the isle of
A THOUSAND DANGERS!
A MORNINGSIDE PRODUCTION FOR
COLUMBIA PICTURES • TECHNICOLOR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THE 3 WORLDS OF
GULLIVER
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adventures among
tiny people
and towering giants.

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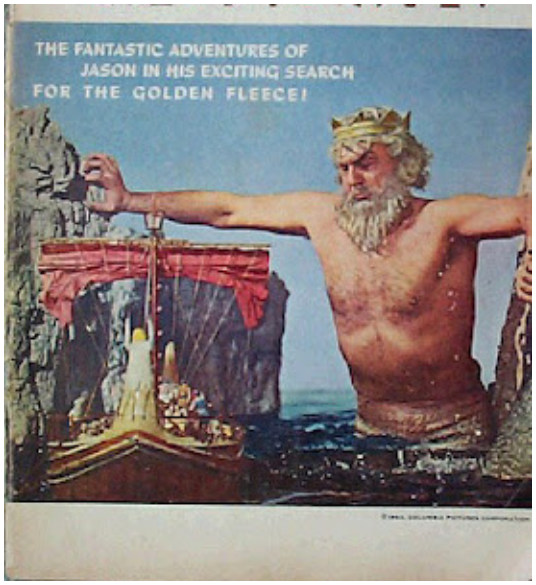
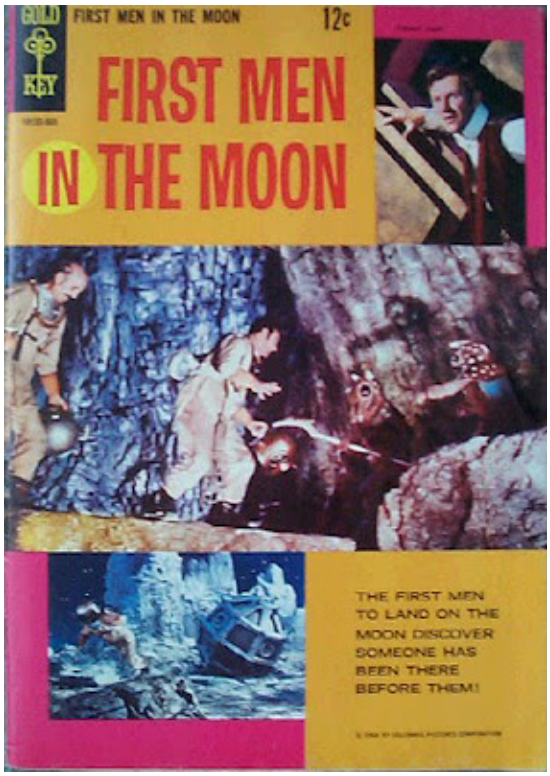
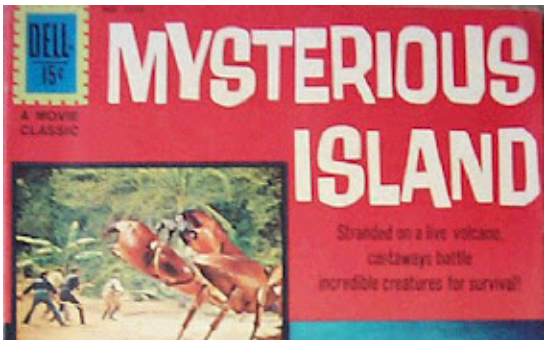
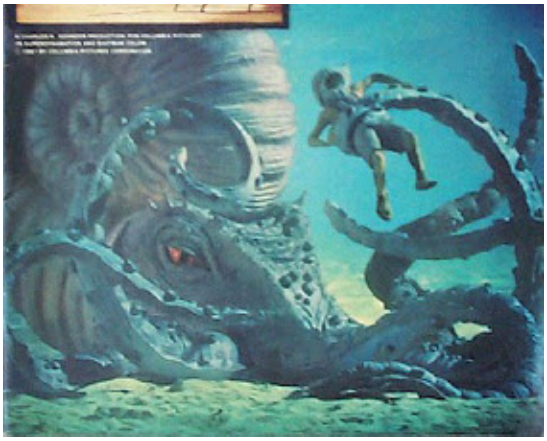



GOLD KEY
FIRST MEN IN THE MOON
12c
FIRST MEN IN THE MOON
THE FIRST MEN TO LAND ON THE MOON DISCOVER SOMEONE HAS BEEN THERE BEFORE THEM!

Looks like Gold Key had to jump in on the excitement (for at least *one* adaptation)





So read 'em and weep...or vice-versa...

Thanks for this post go out to ol' Dell and Gold Key comic mainstays, as well as Ray Harryhausen and Charles H. Schneer for being silver screen mavericks and doin' it *their* way.

posted by c. martin croker at 3:51 am | 5 comments

wednesday, october 10, 2007

The Forbidden Valley?

I was seven in 1969 when this Dell comic came out. I spotted it on the kid-level comics rack at Atkins Drug store on South Cobb Drive and thought from it's cover that it must be the single greatest comic ever published. A herd of cowboys versus GIANT Dinosaurs? --Wow! Once I eyeballed the inside art I equated it more to the best *Classics-Illustrated* comic I'd ever seen.

Though I wound up not actually seeing *The*

Valley of Gwangi movie (a Ray Harryhausen tour-de-force) until a Saturday afternoon in 1979 the dog-eared comic was still around. I guess the idea of cowboys battling dinosaurs in a "forbidden valley" in the old west stayed with me, inspiring more than one epic dream and tall-tale. The sequence where the Wild-West Show-hand wrestles with and breaks the neck of a Pteranadon stood out more than others for some reason. Probably the whole mano-a-mano thing with a prehistoric beastie.

AND NOW... ADIOS! I'M GOING TO FIND A WHOLE HERD OF THOSE LITTLE FELLOWS.
YOU... YOU...
HELLLLLP!
EEEEEEEE
AAIEE! WHAT A BEAST! I WILL SAVE YOU!
HELP! HELP!
IT IS TOO HEAVY TO FLY...
SAVE ME...
WHATEVER YOU ARE... WHEREVER YOU CAME FROM... I WILL DESTROY YOU...
BE CAREFUL!

So recently when I was looking for reference on American Indian Thunderbirds for a short film I want to do, I came across these three seemingly civil war-era photographs... and my first thought was (Gypsy whisper) *Gwangi!*

--and my second was "why haven't I ever seen these before?"

I guess the civil war extended a little further into that ol' forbidden valley than I thought.

Sure, the probability of fakery is 99%, but even still-- what in Holy Hell is *this* thing?
A rotting Platypus with canvas wings?
Still interesting as to why (and when) these pictures would have been faked to begin with. They're not like pictures of Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster or even the Mothman where there's a market for the mania. Plus I've never seen any other "Thunderbird fakes" in books or on the Travel Channel etc. Does that make them any more believable? You decide!
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Labels: Valley of Gwangi Ray Harryhausen Thunderbird Civil War Pteranadon

posted by c. martin croker at 2:39 pm | 2 comments

monday, october 08, 2007

Tom Snyder meets the Monsters (1975)

It's that time of year again! Halloween is right around the corner and I thought this would be a good way to kick off a backlog of Season-related posts I've been planning (but have been too busy to write) all summer. In this 1975 clip from "The Tomorrow Show" Tom gets down with Peter Cushing and Forrest J. Ackerman to talk up some old-school Monster and Horror classics!

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Labels: Tom Snyder 1975 Forry Ackerman Peter Cushing Horror Movies

posted by c. martin croker at 4:47 pm | 2 comments